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FM REO BASRAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0777
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INFO RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEFDHP/DIA DHP-1 WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000063

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BASRAH TRIBAL BATTALIONS FLOUNDERING

REF: A. A. BASRAH 28
[1](#)B. B. BASRAH 25
[1](#)C. C. BASRAH 35
[1](#)D. D. BASRAH 52
[1](#)E. E. BASRAH 50
[1](#)F. F. BASRAH 31
[1](#)G. G. BASRAH 40

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CLASSIFIED BY: Won Lee, A/Director, U.S. Regional Embassy
Office, Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C//REL MCFI) SUMMARY: The tribal battalions established in Basrah by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to assist the Iraqi Security Forces during Operation Charge of the Knights are dying a slow death due to a lack of GOI support (ref A). The Bani Tamim and Bani Malik tribes each organized a battalion in their respective areas of Tannumah and Qurnah. Leaders from both battalions complained that the GOI's failure to pay or equip them is causing dwindling troop morale and desertion. One sheikh claimed that Finance Minister Bayan Jaber refused to fund them, despite the local police chief's pleas to remain active. They asked for direct Coalition assistance or pressure on the GOI to pay them. Barring any improvement, both battalions may shortly cease to exist. End Summary.

AL-QURNAH BATTALION (BANI MALIK)

[1](#)2. (C//REL MCFI) Sheikh Salam al-Maliki, head of the Bani Malik tribe, told us June 21 that the tribal battalion formed in Qurnah mostly hailed from his tribe and was comprised of 750 men organized into ten platoons. According to sources in Qurnah, this battalion mostly secured key facilities at the direction of the Iraqi Police during Charge of the Knights. Salam said that the battalion currently trains four hours each morning at its headquarters in the Al-Thagher district under the leadership of former Iraqi Special Forces officer, Colonel Fuad al-Maliki. After their morning training is completed, the members return to their homes or jobs.

SHATT AL-ARAB BATTALION (BANI TAMIM)

[1](#)3. (C//REL MCFI) The 760-member battalion dominated by the Bani Tamim tribe was formed in the Shatt al-Arab (aka Tannumah) district east of Basra city and has been the more active of the two units (ref B). During Operation Charge of the Knights, they netted several large weapons caches, arrested known JAM members,

secured key infrastructure in their area, provided intelligence to the ISF, and converted the Office of the Martyr Sadr office into their headquarters. The tribe's leader, Sheikh Mansur Kanaan al-Tamimi, and the battalion commander, Colonel Louway, told us June 30 that the GOI equipped them with only 170 AK47s, 12 PKC, and 10 vehicles for which a meager 20 liters of petrol a day is issued. Thus, only five of the vehicles are used at a time and most members are expected to bring their own weapons to duty.

¶4. (C//REL MCFI) According to COL Louway, the battalion currently patrols the Iranian border from Schalamcha to al-Neshwa. Their patrols, he noted, discovered that insurgents look for old weapon caches in bunkers from the Iran-Iraq war and use the bunkers to operate from. His battalion planned to establish checkpoints along the border at key crossing sites, but gave up the idea lacking equipment and trailers to man the checkpoints.

LACK OF GOI SUPPORT YIELDS DIMINISHING MORALE

¶5. (C//REL MCFI) Both battalions complained that the GOI is failing to equip and pay them as PM Maliki promised during Operation Charge of the Knights (refs C, D & E). As a result, morale is dwindling. Police Chief Major General Adl Darham has promised both battalions that salaries are forthcoming. His encouragement has helped in Qurnah, but according to COL Louway, members of the Tannumah battalion have become so frustrated that 60 members resigned in June and he expects to lose more than that in July. Louway added that it was becoming more difficult for the officers to control the soldiers without salaries.

¶6. (C//REL MCFI) Both Mansur and Salam flatly denied rumors that Acting Justice Minister Safa al Safi made USD 19 million in salary payments to the tribes out of the USD 100 million taken from the provincial budget for reconstruction projects (refs F &

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G). Mansur also claimed to have heard-through IP Administrative Director Brigadier Abdel Hameed-that Finance Minister Bayan Jaber refuses to fund tribal initiatives and that PM Maliki is allegedly working to resolve the dispute. Both sheikhs requested Coalition training and financial assistance, or Coalition pressure on the GOI to pay them.

COMMENT

¶7. (C//REL MCFI) Typical of Arab governments during military crisis, the GOI likely made promises to tribal leaders to elicit their support during Operation Charge of the Knights without any intention of fulfilling those promises. PM Maliki was opposed to any Sons of Iraq-like initiatives before Charge of the Knights and his change of mind in the middle of operations was a surprise. By not paying or equipping the battalions, the GOI is allowing the initiative to die a slow death. Frustrated by the GOI's broken promises, Mansur and Salam both accused Iran and Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim of pressuring the GOI not to support tribal initiatives in southern Iraq fearing empowered tribes could oppose Tehran or ISCI/Badr's designs on Basrah. True or not, the lack of support will inhibit both tribes from throwing around the added weight they hoped to possess during future provincial elections. For now, local ISF units have not complained that the tribal battalions have exceeded their authority, but without Coalition support, we anticipate both battalions will cease to exist in three months. End comment.

WLEE